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## Review Article

# Chinese translation of English textbooks on internal medicine from the 1850s to the 1940s

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## Abstract

During the 100 years from 1850 to 1949, six English textbooks on internal medicine were translated into Chinese and published. Publication of these books was a response to the increased demand for Chinese textbooks after the opening of several Western-style hospitals and medical schools in China where the instruction was in Chinese. Throughout this period, textbooks translated from English were regarded as symbols of mainstream and authority within medical communities in China. There was a shift of translators from British and American medical missionaries to Chinese medical elites. Publishers also changed from missionary hospitals or missionary organizations to the Chinese Medical Association, which was led by ethnic Chinese. After the 1950s, translation activity continued in Taiwan, but it was halted in China until after the Cultural Revolution. This paper provides bibliographic information about these books. The transition of medical authority in China during this 100-year period is also reviewed through the successive publication of translated textbooks on internal medicine.

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**Keywords:** bibliography; China; history of medicine; internal medicine; textbook

## 1. Introduction

The 1850s was a difficult time for China. Some historians consider it as the start of modern China.<sup>1</sup> Unable to recover from the defeat of first Anglo–Chinese War, China suffered massive further destruction because of the Taiping Rebellion. From then on, the glories of ancient China were critically challenged by Western superpowers, while the traditions of Chinese culture were radically changed by the incoming flow of Western civilization.<sup>2</sup>

Medicine was an integral part of this change. Catholic Jesuits brought European medical knowledge to China in the

17th and 18th centuries. However, they made little impact on the ideals and practice of medicine in China.<sup>3</sup>

In the 19th century Protestant missionaries began extensive and intensive activities in China. British and American missionaries had the most important role in facilitating changes in every aspect of medicine.<sup>4</sup> In 1807, the London Missionary Society sent Robert Morrison, the first of these Protestant missionaries, to China. Morrison translated the *New Testament* into Chinese and published the first English–Chinese and Chinese–English Dictionary.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Richardson Colledge was a ship surgeon serving in the British East India Company. He opened a dispensary for Chinese people in Macao in 1827, and then another dispensary in Canton (now called Guangzhou). Both dispensaries received outpatients, but the former also admitted inpatients. Colledge was the first physician to propose the idea of making the practice of medicine an auxiliary in introducing Christianity to China.<sup>6</sup>

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Peter Parker, a Yale graduate in medicine and in theology, was the first medical missionary to China. In 1835, he founded the Canton Hospital, which was the first Western-style hospital in China.<sup>7</sup>

Increased numbers of medical missionaries came to China to build Western-style hospitals and teach Chinese students Western medicine. There was a demand for Chinese medical textbooks translated from Western languages. Because British and American Protestants predominated among the missionaries, medical books translated from other European languages were comparatively small. Even after the role of missionaries faded away, leading Chinese physicians continued to translate English-language medical books into Chinese until China instituted a full-scale policy against the United States in the 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

There is little literature providing bibliographic information on these books with the exception of some brief surveys.<sup>8</sup> Early translators rarely cited the sources for their translations. The dynamic interrelationship between the translated books, the translators, and the historical events in China also have not previously been analyzed. The purpose of this paper is to review the progression of medicine in China during this 100-year period through the successive publications of translated textbooks on internal medicine.

The term “internal medicine” did not appear in the title of any English books being translated. However, it appeared in all Chinese editions. Books with “medicine” in the title were generally and historically understood as books on internal medicine in China and in Europe. The first book in China with the distinctive title of internal medicine appeared in the 16th century.<sup>9</sup> Translators of the following books designated the title of “internal medicine” with the understanding that only topics on internal medicine were covered in these books.

## 2. 1858: *Practice of Medicine and Materia Medica* (內科新說) by Hobson<sup>10</sup>

In 1839, Benjamin Hobson came to China. He served for the London Missionary Society in Macau, Hong Kong, and Canton. He married the only daughter of Robert Morrison after the death of his first wife.<sup>11</sup> In 1851 in Canton, Hobson published his first Chinese medical book, *Treatise on Anatomy and Physiology* (全體新論).<sup>12</sup> In 1855, he published his second book, *Treatise on Natural Philosophy and Natural History* (博物新編).<sup>13</sup> In 1856, he left Canton for Shanghai because the hospital he founded in Canton was burned during a wave of Chinese hostility towards foreigners during the second Anglo–Chinese war. In 1844 in Shanghai, he worked with William Lockhart, who opened the first Western hospital, Renji (仁濟).<sup>6</sup> Renji Hospital is now part of Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

In 1857, Renji Hospital published Hobson’s *First Lines of the Practice of Surgery* (西醫略論).<sup>14</sup> In 1858, *Treatise on Midwifery and Diseases of Children* (婦嬰新說)<sup>15</sup> and *Practice of Medicine and Materia Medica*<sup>10</sup> were published. In addition to the five medical books in Chinese, Hobson compiled *A Medical Vocabulary in English and Chinese* (醫學

英華字釋).<sup>16</sup> This was the first English–Chinese medical dictionary. *Nei Ke Xin Shuo*, the Chinese title for *Practice of Medicine and Materia Medica* means “New Sayings in Internal Medicine”. This book was divided into two parts, the first part was an introduction of diseases and treatment, and the second part was the materia medica.

Like Hobson’s other medical books, *Practice of Medicine and Materia Medica* was not a translation of any one English work in particular. As Hobson explained in the preface: “Methods for disease diagnosis and drug treatments discussed in this book were taken from European medical books. Key points of them were picked up and translated into Chinese”. Hobson authored all of his medical books and Mao-Cai Guan (管茂材) coauthored the three books published in Shanghai. Guan was born into a scholar’s family; he moved to Shanghai as a refugee of the Taiping Rebellion. He was interested in traditional Chinese medicine and in Western medicine. Thanks to his literary skill, Hobson’s medical books were translated in an elegant style that was easy to understand and interesting to read.

Except for the *Treatise on Anatomy and Physiology*, Hobson’s books were not revised, but all were reprinted repeatedly. Renji Hospital had a policy allowing anyone who wanted to read these books to make a copy from the original printing plates, which were stored at the hospital: “if he carries his own paper and ink ... the hospital will not charge a penny”. There were also reprints of these books in Japan.<sup>17</sup>

## 3. 1883: *Theory and Practice of Medicine* (西醫內科全書) by Kerr<sup>18</sup>

In 1854, John Glasgow Kerr, a graduate from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, PA, USA came to China. In 1855, he succeeded Peter Parker as the leader of the Canton Hospital. The following year, the hospital was burned during the second Anglo–Chinese War.<sup>6</sup>

In 1859, Kerr reopened the hospital and named it “Boji” (博濟) in Chinese. In 1866, he moved Boji Hospital to its current site. A medical school affiliated with the hospital was opened during the same year. In 1886, Sun Yat-Sen, founder of the Republic of China, studied in this school for 1 year before he went to Hong Kong to study in the newly opened Hong Kong Medical College for Chinese, the predecessor of the Medical Faculty of the University of Hong Kong.<sup>19,20</sup> Boji Hospital is currently the Second Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-Sen University.

With the progress of the medical school, there was a lack of adequate Chinese textbooks. Kerr commented in 1870 that “the time has arrived when medical students need fuller treatises on each branch”.<sup>6</sup>

In 1883, the first Chinese edition of such a book was published by Boji Hospital in a set of six volumes. Its Chinese title was *Xi Yi Nei Ke Chuan Su* (i.e., “Complete Book of Internal Medicine in Western Medicine”). Qing-Gao Kong (孔慶高) translated it and Kerr proofed it. Because Kerr had the idea to translate this book and gave Kong the English texts, it is justified to regard Kerr as the compiler of the book.

Neither Kerr nor Kong provided in *Xi Yi Nei Ke Chuan Su* any information about the source from which the book was translated. In 1909, Mary West Niles indicated in the “preface to revision” for the second edition of this book that “Kerr used Bartholow, Roberts, and Flint to compile his translation”.<sup>21–23</sup> The contents of the Chinese-language book in general followed the order of Bartholow’s book with a few modifications adapted from other books.

There were three prefaces to the first volume of *Xi Yi Nei Ke Chuan Su*, one preface was by the translator Kong. He gave an account of how he spent 3 years translating the book after Kerr showed him the English text and Kerr had cured Kong’s malaria-like disease by following the instruction of the book. Kerr gave a preface to volume 5 in which he criticized the inadequacy of traditional Chinese medicine in the diagnosis and treatment of febrile diseases.

In 1886, the China Medical Missionary Association (博醫會) was founded in Shanghai. Kerr was elected as its first president.<sup>6</sup> After his death, Niles revised this book and the China Medical Missionary Association published it in 1909 with the title *Kerr’s Practice of Medicine* (嘉氏內科學), *Second Edition*. In 1916, a third edition was published, which was also revised by Niles.<sup>24</sup> The ninth edition of *The Practice of Medicine* compiled by Frederick Taylor<sup>25</sup> was used as the standard for Niles to revise Kerr’s book.

#### 4. 1889: *Hooper’s Physician’s Vade Mecum* (內科理法) by Shu and Zhau<sup>26</sup>

After China was defeated in several military confrontations with foreign countries, the Self-strengthening Movement began in China. One project in this campaign was to establish a modern defense industry. In 1865, the Jiangnan Arsenal (江南製造總局) was opened in Shanghai. The Translation Bureau was established as a division of the arsenal.<sup>27</sup> Non-Chinese individuals were appointed in the bureau as translators. The most active translator was John Fryer. He translated more than 100 books into Chinese, mostly in science and technology. He was not trained in medicine; however, he and Yuan-Yi Zhau (趙元益) translated *A Medical Manual* (儒門醫學),<sup>28</sup> which was written primarily for the general public.<sup>29</sup>

In 1889, the Jiangnan Arsenal published the Chinese translation of the ninth edition of *Hooper’s Physician’s Vade Mecum*.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese title of this book, *Nei Ke Li Fa*, means “Theory and Method in Internal Medicine”. *Vade Mecum* in Latin means “go with me” (i.e., pocket reference). Gao-Di Shu (舒高第) was the verbal translator and Yuan-Yi Zhau the recorder.

Shu was born into a farmer’s family. An American missionary brought him to the United States where he received an education in medicine and theology. In addition to *Hooper’s Physician’s Vade Mecum*, he translated *Martindale’s Extra Pharmacopeia* and several other medical books into Chinese.

Zhau was a scholar skillful in traditional Chinese medicine. He traveled extensively in Europe as a physician to the Chinese diplomatic team. At the Translation Bureau, he worked closely with Fryer and Shu in translating medical books.

*Nei Ke Li Fa* was divided into two parts. The first part contained six introductory chapters, whereas the second part was divided into six chapters on general diseases and ten chapters covering special diseases. An appendix provided a classification of remedies and formulae, based on the *British Pharmacopeia* of 1867.<sup>31</sup> The book’s glossarial index, which was present in English edition of the *Vade Mecum*, was not translated into Chinese. Aside from this exception, the Chinese edition was a sentence-by-sentence translation of the English original.

#### 5. 1910: *Osler’s Principles and Practice of Medicine* (歐氏內科學) by Cousland<sup>32</sup>

There have been comprehensive reviews on the history for the English editions<sup>33</sup> and Chinese translations<sup>34</sup> of Osler’s classic textbook.<sup>35</sup> A major activity of the China Medical Missionary Association was to standardize Chinese medical terms translated from English.<sup>6</sup> Philip Brunelleschi Cousland was most active in accomplishing this task. Besides Osler’s textbook, he compiled *An English–Chinese Lexicon for Medical Terms*<sup>36</sup> for the Association. Revised editions of this medical dictionary were later known in China as *Cousland’s Medical Lexicon* (高氏醫學詞彙).

Cousland’s Chinese edition of Osler’s textbook was first published in five thin volumes between 1909 and 1910, and then published in a bound volume in 1910. The title page of the 1909 edition indicated it was a translation of the fifth and sixth English editions, which were published in 1902 and 1905, respectively. The title page of the 1910 edition stated it was a translation of the seventh English edition.<sup>37</sup> The translator apparently made a hurried revision of his translation when the new seventh English edition appeared in 1909. The 1909 and 1910 editions were both apparently regarded by Cousland as the first Chinese edition.<sup>34</sup>

Cousland was the verbal translator of this book. According to the Chinese preface by Hui-Rong Hsiao (蕭惠榮), several Chinese physicians in Chaozhou helped record the first translation. Chaozhou was the city where Cousland had served as a medical missionary since 1888, and Hsiao was one of his students there.

Tian-Yi Du (杜天一), a Chinese resident in Japan, also wrote a preface and helped revise the original translation. Du made a stylistic upgrade for better written flow before this Chinese edition of *Osler’s Principles and Practice of Medicine* was printed by the Fukuin Printing Company in Yokohama, Japan.<sup>34</sup>

This Chinese version was not an exact translation of the English edition. This is best explained by the translator’s own words in the preface: “Diseases rare or unknown in China have been dealt with somewhat tersely, whereas others have been taken in whole or in part from Sir Patrick Manson’s *Tropical Diseases*”.

A second Chinese edition of *Osler’s Principles and Practice of Medicine*, which was based on the eighth English edition of 1912, was published in 1920. A third Chinese edition was published in 1925, based on the ninth English edition

of 1920. The third Chinese edition was reprinted several times until 1938, one year after the start of the Sino–Japanese War. During these years, several new English editions had been published, but the third Chinese edition was not revised, with only later medical progresses provided as appendices in the reprinted Chinese versions.

## 6. 1936: *Wheeler and Jack's Handbook of Medicine* (惠嘉二式內科要覽) by McCall et al<sup>38</sup>

In 1925, the China Medical Missionary Association changed its name to the China Medical Association to include more nonmissionary members. In 1932, the China Medical Association joined with the National Medical Association of China to form the Chinese Medical Association. The National Medical Association of China, founded in 1915, was composed primarily of Chinese individuals who were trained to practice Western medicine.<sup>6</sup> The joining of the two associations signified the decreasing importance of medical missionaries in China and the increasing influence of local Chinese practitioners.

The newly formed Chinese Medical Association set up an office for its Council of Publication in Jinan, the capital city of Shandong Province. The Chinese Medical Association published numerous medical books in Chinese. Among them were successive editions of *Cousland's Medical Lexicon*; the third edition of *Osler's Principles and Practice of Medicine*; *Wheeler and Jack's Handbook of Medicine*; and *Cecil Textbook of Medicine*.

In 1894, Alexander Wheeler published *A Student's Handbook of Medicine and Therapeutics*.<sup>39</sup> William Robert Jack made revisions from the second to the eighth editions; in 1932, John Henderson revised the ninth edition of this renamed book.<sup>40</sup> The ninth edition was the version translated into Chinese in 1936, a year prior to the start of the Sino–Japanese War.

Percy Lonsdale McCall was director and De-Xin Lu (魯德馨) was his deputy in the publication office. According to the preface by Lu, four young medical graduates from the newly established, government-sponsored Shanghai Medical College also participated in the translation. After the book was published, they all went abroad for advanced studies. They successfully became leading professors on their return to China.

## 7. 1949: *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* (西色爾氏內科學) by Yang<sup>41</sup>

The end of Second World War in 1945 ended China's 8-year struggle with Japan; however, civil war soon ensued. The Communist Party, led by Mao Ze-Dong, overthrew the Nationalist government that was led by Chiang Kai-Shek, who brought the authority of the Republic of China to the island Taiwan, along with one million followers who crossed the 90-mile Taiwan Strait. In 1949, Mao announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China in Beijing.<sup>2</sup>

At this moment of historical change, the Chinese Medical Association published the first volume of the Chinese edition

of the *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* in November, 1949, which was 1 month after the birth of the People's Republic. This Chinese version was a translation of the seventh English edition published in 1947.<sup>42</sup> Volume 1 covered only subjects on infectious diseases. Funding for the publication of volume 1 was provided by the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China, an organization founded in 1937 to respond to the health needs of the embattled Chinese.<sup>43</sup> Cecil wrote a preface for the Chinese translation; he specifically mentioned that a Spanish translation was published in 1945.

Ji-Shi Yang (楊濟時), a prominent hematologist, was the translator-in-chief of this book. In the preface, he stated that several medical students made the first draft of the translation, whereas he and other senior physicians proofed the manuscript. However, in early 1949, Yang left Shanghai and the publication was only made possible through the efforts of Xin-En Yu (余欣恩). Yu wrote an editorial note to record the difficulties of issuing this book at a time of extreme social and political turmoil.

The Chinese Medical Association was split into two organizations: one organization was in Taiwan and the other organization was in Beijing. Neither organization published the second volume or the third volume of the Chinese translation of *Cecil Textbook of Medicine*. Between 1950 and 1953, Longmen (龍門, "Dragon Gate" in Chinese), a Shanghai publishing house specializing in science and technology books published an abridged and modified translation in three volumes. Volume 1 on infectious diseases was translated from the seventh English edition, whereas volumes 2 and 3 were primarily translated from the eighth English edition of 1951. Chao-Chang Chen (陳超常), a prominent parasitologist, was the translator-in-chief for this version. Until 1957, this translation was reprinted several times.<sup>44</sup>

## 8. Epilogue

Chinese translations of English medical books came to a halt when China established a full-scale anti-American policy from the 1950s to the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> After several unsuccessful attempts, Xian-Cai Wang (王賢才) single-handedly completed the translation of the 15<sup>th</sup> English edition of *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* once the intellectual hardship of the Cultural Revolution was over. It was published in 10 volumes from 1980 to 1985 by the Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House. A few years later, the Chinese government recognized him for his contribution to translational work. He was considered one of the most outstanding translators of contemporary China.<sup>45,46</sup>

Although the translation of American books was discouraged in China for several decades, there was an active cultural and medical exchange between people in Taiwan and the United States during this period. In 1972, the first Chinese edition of *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine* was published in Taiwan.<sup>47</sup> It was a translation of the sixth English edition.<sup>48</sup> Bor-Shen Hsieh (謝博生) and six other young physicians affiliated with the National Taiwan University Hospital (Taipei City, Taiwan) were the translators, whereas their chief of medicine, Juei-Low Sung (宋瑞樓), was credited



as the proofreader. Several of these translators later took leading medical positions in Taiwan. For example, Hsieh became Dean of the National Taiwan University Medical College (Taipei, Taiwan) and Yun-Fan Liao (廖運範) became a member of Academia Sinica.

Publication of medical textbooks in Europe and America is generally an academic and a business activity. A bevy of new textbooks is always available in bookstores. However, it can be understood from this review that, during the past 100 years, translation of an English-language book on internal medicine into Chinese was a demonstration of medical authority in China. These books inform readers about the progress of medical sciences and observes the shifting of prestige and influence in the Chinese medical community.

Despite the fact that many medical textbooks edited by Chinese authors are now available in China, a demand remains for more Chinese translations of English-language medical textbooks. These books are no longer an aid to spread the Christian Gospel, but are a mediator for the promotion of health and welfare to mankind. Led only by scientific advances, this undertaking now sets aside politics and conflicts.

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